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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7930  
INFO RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 9222  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ AUG LIMA 5304  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5903  
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 4035  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1484

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 005672

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/22/2016

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KJUS](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: SAN JOSE DE APARTADO VISIT HIGHLIGHTS SECURITY,  
HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer.  
Reason: 1.4 (b,d)

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SUMMARY  
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1. (C) On August 1, Poloffs met with members of the 17th Brigade, local police, the Peace Community (PC) and the Human Rights Ombudsman in San Jose de Apartado to highlight concern over recent violence and press security forces to respect human rights. The 17th Brigade and the San Jose de Apartado police recognized the need to provide security for the entire Apartado area, including the PC, and the police said they were investigating the recent murder of Dairo Torres. PC members in San Jose de Apartado reported a worsening security situation, suggesting "obvious collusion" between police and newly emerging criminal groups. The community refuses to deal with the GOC until certain demands are met, including GOC recognition of humanitarian zones and a formal apology from President Uribe. The Human Rights Ombudsman and local MAPP/OAS observers said security on the whole had improved in the region, with numerous residents returning to the area. End summary.

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SECURITY CONCERNS FOR THE PEACE COMMUNITY  
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2. (C) On August 1, Poloffs met with and Colonel Jorge Arturo Salgado Restrepo (Deputy Commander) of the 17th Brigade and Captain Jaime Aguilera (head of the 17th Human Rights office) to voice concerns about respecting human rights and ensuring security for the San Jose de Apartado Peace Community's (PC) and other local residents. Aguilera told us the 17th was not involved in the Prosecutor General's (Fiscalia) investigation of the murder of former PC leader Dairo Torres on July 13. The police had responsibility for security on the ten-kilometer road linking the PC to Apartado. Torres was taken off a bus traveling on the road and was killed. Aguilera and Salgado said they were cooperating with the Fiscalia's investigation of 69 brigade members allegedly involved in the February 2005 massacre of PC leaders.

3. (C) Poloffs urged local and regional police (including Major Edisson Puentes and Lieutenant Portela of the Human Rights Office) to ensure they respect human rights while maintaining order. The Police said they had lost two officers in July, apparently killed by FARC snipers. The policeman killed on July 27 near the PC was part of a pre-security detail for a visiting GOC delegation (Accion Social) to distribute aid. In response, the police set up a checkpoint in front of the PC on July 30 to help investigate the

shooting and to protect the Peace Community. The police told us they have not entered the community, but do not rule out the possibility of doing so as part of its investigation. Major Puentes said there is an ongoing investigation into the death of Torres, who had left the PC three years ago but had remained in the San Jose de Apartado area. The police had no motive, but said family members told them Torres had drug and alcohol problems.

¶4. (U) On a visit to La Holandita, community leaders and representatives of Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) and Peace Brigades International (PBI) said the recent increase in violence was a direct threat to the community and evidence of "obvious collaboration" between the police and paramilitary groups. They voiced concern about the police checkpoint on July 30, but confirmed the checkpoint had been removed the same day. (Poloff had called the Colombian National Police (CNP) Headquarters earlier on July 30 to express concerns about the checkpoint, and they assured us it would be removed). They said Torres, as well as others who had left the PC for economic or personal reasons, still maintained close ties with the community.

¶5. (U) PC leaders said FOR and PBI volunteers talk to the police occasionally about general security concerns, but the community will not communicate directly with the GOC security forces until: 1) the GOC sets up a commission to investigate violence against the community; 2) President Uribe publicly apologizes and acknowledges PC members are not guerrillas, 3) the GOC publicly recognizes humanitarian zones; and 4) the GOC removes the local police station in San Jose de Apartado which is located half a mile from Holandita. The community expressed concern over repeated statements by various GOC

security forces that they "were all guerrillas, all FARC".

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DEMOBILIZED PARAMILITARY ISSUES  
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¶6. (C) Poloffs reiterated the need to implement the recent Ministry of Defense (MOD) directive banning demobilized paramilitaries from the Red de Cooperantes to Colonel Salgado and Captain Aguilera. Salgado said the 17th's use of Red de Cooperantes was solely for information, but (with an additional reminder from Colonel Gomez of the MOD's Human Rights office) said he would look into better applying the new directives. He said he was absolutely clear on not allowing demobilized paramilitary in any combatant role.

¶7. (C) Local Defensor del Pueblo (Human Rights Ombudsman) Ruben Dario Diaz and OAS/MAPP representative Eleuterio Cahuec del Valle said the emerging criminal groups in the area, Aguilas Negras and Renacer, were composed of rearmed paramilitaries, who were paid by narcotraffickers to control land and drug corridors. Both noted the groups had none of the ideological undertones that drove the AUC and were motivated purely by profit. Cahuec del Valle stressed the lack of jobs and expiration of reinsertion stipends may spur more demobilized to join these bands. He stressed the need to find alternative solutions to keep former paras out of the drug trade.

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SECURITY TRENDS AND RETURNEES  
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¶8. (C) The Defensor and the OAS representative said displaced persons continue to return to their homes due to increased confidence in the security situation. Recent violence seemed to be targeted with personal or business motivations, not part of a larger political statement. The Defensor said some of the returnees are returning to rural areas, such as San Jose de Apartado, and will demand a greater security presence. Fighting over land among the returnees could become a potential problem. Continued FARC presence remains a concern, especially in rural areas, with roving bands of 2-3 guerrillas patrolling controlled and contested areas.

